Modern electronic technology offers us a means of perception never before possible with the human eye, and has inspired a social and artistic revolution the end result of which no one can adequately predict.

Beginning in the mid-1940s, commercial television co-opted the models, forms, and talents of commercial radio and soon enjoyed an unchallenged dominance in the field of home entertainment.

Two decades later a variety of circumstances also brought television into the hands of artists and into the art gallery.

Among the factors which contributed to the growth of television as an artist's medium were the introduction of small-format, inexpensive, portable video equipment that was the forerunner of today's home BETA or VHS machine; a general upheaval in the art world which tended to devalue the "unique" art object and to focus instead on art-making as a labor-saving machine; and a renewed emphasis on the sort of innovation which often fulfills our best artists - may become the major commodity.

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Like television, the digital computer is for the most part a post-war phenomenon. At first, the sheer speed with which it was capable of complex mathematical calculations emphasized its value as an efficient means of eliminating countless hours of human drudgery. Soon, however, the digital computer became much more. As the video camera mimics the human eye, so does the computer the human brain and, in the hands of artists, the human imagination. A machine originally conceived largely as a labor-saving device also became a powerful tool for controlling the arts of sound and image making.

Sonic and visual artists grappled with this electronic monster even at its earliest stages, when the most powerful computers literally filled large rooms in laboratories and universities. But as computer technology grew more powerful, it also became more compact; as a result, the popular awareness of the vast capabilities of computers offered for changing our notions of communication, art, and culture in general became more commonplace. The home computing system - which often fulfills utilitarian and entertainment needs simultaneously - has grown increasingly smaller, cheaper, and more accessible. The day may well arrive when, as theorist Gene Youngblood has suggested, "our major task as a global society will not be to create new tools but, rather, new desires which increasing-

ly sophisticated electronic communication systems can help us to realize." As we move rapidly into a society in which the transmission of information is ever more prominent, imagination - the very thing for which we prize our best artists - may become the major commodity.

Video and the computer too have shared a somewhat subtle, yet troublesome relationship. By virtue of their access to and understanding of the computer technology, many designer/technicians have produced graphic works for which they have been heralded as artists. Often their visions focused largely on the capabilities of the machine in question. Needless to say, the resultant products have been more demonstrative of a playful naivete with the large capacities of the computer and other new technologies as a result either of skepticism or an impatience with learning the skills required to attain the abilities for a free and natural expression with these new tools.

Electronic Visions has been made possible by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts and by the ongoing support of the City of Yonkers and of the individual and corporate members of The Hudson River Renaissance.

The Hudson River Museum invites you to participate in Interactions: Manipulating Technology, a panel discussion with the artists represented in Electronic Visions on Thursday evening, July 28, 1983, at 8:00 p.m. at 10:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays until 9:00 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays at 12:00 noon until 7:00 p.m.

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The Exhibition

The art in Electronic Vision has bridged the gap between technology and art. It represents a variety of ways in which recent technological breakthroughs have merged with artistic sensibilities.

Machine Vision makes no use of computer technology but relies instead on an electromagnetic device upon which are mounted live video cameras. The use of video as an interactive system constantly makes us aware of the ways in which our sense of space and our sense of presence in that space may be transformed in wholly new and different ways. Formal terms, Vasulka's Machine Vision is self-observing, for the camera view themselves and their surroundings in a mirrored hall, and reflective, for it is about the act of looking at oneself. It is also, as the title suggests, about a self-contained, non-human system that once started, is untouched by human hands.

In conjunction with David Jones and others at the Experimental Television Center in Owego, New York, Ralph Hocking and Sherry Miller have designed a "homebuilt" computerized system for drawing on paper images initially recorded on videotape. Their series of digital renderings of the female nude recall a centuries-long fascination of artists with the human form. These sensual and compelling images remind us that the graphic plotter may be considered as a media, expressing an innate sense of visual excitement as the brush or the hammer and chisel.

A series of static wall panels by Woody Vasulka illustrates the stages in the process of electronic manipulation of video images. Unapologetically didactic, his study of image transformation is accompanied by a series of videotapes produced on the Vasulka Image Calculator. This series exhibits the extraordinary freedom of this personalized, self-designed technological system and demonstrates the control of the artist operating in an exploratory mode. The exquisite beauty of the images that may be produced by use of digital computer video processing is especially apparent in Vasulka's work.

Vasulka's Machine Vision presents a unique, non-human system that once started, is untouched by human hands. Past this it should be added that the viewer would do best to peek, and then peer through, and finally peel away those layers of image and sound in the process develop personal ways of discovering the richness of Glass Onion.

"Physicality the installation consists of 4 rectangles: on the "outside," the 4 monitors; next, 4 speakers; next, in the center: a single monitor.

- The central monitor and 8 speakers are on the floor, facing up. - Facing down from the ceiling, a camera with an automated zoom ranges from all the way "in" and all the way "out." The central monitor shows successive transformations and transformations of electronically generated rectangles. These expanded and shrunk in general with the sound tracks. - These tracks are measured according to the slow and deliberate "vocoded" or "sounded" sound tracks of the tape. - These rectangles are measured according to the slow and deliberate "vocoded" enunciation of the sound tracks of the tape. - It is helpful to know these things in advance and to pay attention to the sound track. - These rectangles are measured according to the slow and deliberate "vocoded" enunciation of the sound tracks of the tape. - These rectangles are measured according to the slow and deliberate "vocoded" enunciation of the sound tracks of the tape. - These rectangles are measured according to the slow and deliberate "vocoded" enunciation of the sound tracks of the tape.

Since their invention in 1947, holograms have been of static objects recorded through a careful and painstaking process. Recently a number of moving holograms have been made, including one of a woman blowing a kiss to the viewer as he walks by a cylindrical screen. Full-scale holographic movies, which have been in the works for over a decade, remain only a possibility for the future. In the meantime, Dan Sandin's contribution to the field of holography resides in the reproduction of images which exhibit all the properties of three-dimensional objects but which have been created by the totally synthetic means of computer technology.

Electronic Vision is by no means exhaustive of the vast and compelling array of works being done today by visual artists working with video, computers, and other advanced technologies. It is but a sampling of the pro-active field of the iceberg, but one which, it is hoped, will entertain and enlighten even as it challenges our traditional notions of art and the ways in which it is, and will be, created.

John Minkowski
Guest Curator